

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
VFW Post 10386, 3036 John L Ave, Kingman AZ
Saturday, November 15, 2008

M I N U T E S

Sent to Chairman for approval 11/17/08

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 10:12 a.m. by Chairman Yamanouchi.

Present

Advisory Commissioners

Kenneth Yamanouchi, Chairman
Linda Fulkerson, Vice Chairwoman
Thomas Heaney
Phillip Quochytewa Sr.
Bill Lunsford
Larry McKim
Terrie Gent
George Cushing

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

Joey Strickland, Director
Mike Klier, Assistant Director Veterans'
Services Division
Jaimee Paine, Veterans' Benefits Counselor
Lee Borgen, Veterans' Benefits Counselor

Absent

Gary Fredricks

Guests

Doris Goodale, AZ State Representative
District 3
Joe Bibich, Chairman AZ Military Family Relief
Fund

Opening: Chairman Yamanouchi opened the meeting at 10:12 a.m. with appropriate ceremony. VFW Post 3516 color guard posted the colors.

Chairman Yamanouchi thanked the color guard for their participation and recognized the distinguished guests.

Minutes - The minutes of October 9, 2008 were approved as distributed. (Moved by Commissioner McKim and seconded by Commissioner Cushing.)

Chairman Yamanouchi gave a detailed overview of the Advisory Commission, its makeup, mission and accomplishments.

- Commissioner Fulkerson noted that often individual Commissioners take on special projects. Her special projects include providing assistance with veteran stand downs. She is also working to get emergency mental health resources for veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) who need immediate assistance after hours. Former Commissioner Bibich's special project was getting free state tuition for children of Arizona military personnel killed on active duty.
- Commissioner Gent noted that PTSD is a very big issue with personnel returning from deployment as well as veterans. There are ongoing efforts to involve faith based communities to help families upon the military member's return from deployment and veterans.

Chairman Yamanouchi observed that 91% of injured who receive emergency medical care within 10 minutes survive. Based on this, all deploying Army personnel receive 24 hours of life saving training prior to departure.

Agency Announcements:

1. Director Strickland:

- Arizona Department of Veterans' Services (ADVS) is essentially self-funded rather than being fully supported by State resources. The majority of agency funding comes from such things as the Fiduciary Division, the State Veteran Home and sales of the Arizona Veteran license plate and the Arizona Freedom license plate.
- VBCs were instrumental in bringing over 800 million dollars into the State economy in 2007 through their efforts assisting veterans receive their entitlements from the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). Arizona is ranked 8th in the Nation for dollars brought into the state with the assistance of Veterans' Benefits Counselors.

Chairman Yamanouchi noted that most states do more for veterans than Arizona. There is a need to address the issues of female veterans and rural veterans. He noted that Governor Napolitano has been very supportive of ADVS efforts.

Commissioner Heaney raised the issue of Arizona increasing the income tax exemption on military retired pay beyond \$2,500 per year. He expressed the hope that efforts will be successful in getting an incrementally increasing exemption.

- Currently, remotely located ADVS departments (other than Veteran Services and the State Veteran Home) are being relocated to the main office location at 3839 North 3rd Street in Phoenix.
- Most veteran programs are centered in the metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson. The Agency is working on efforts to develop comprehensive support centers for rural veterans. This is in response to the notably increasing veteran population throughout rural Arizona.
- Work continues on a State veteran cemetery in northeast Arizona and the State veteran home in Tucson.
- Initial paperwork has been submitted to develop a State veterans' cemetery in Yuma. In a nutshell, the process is: acquisition of land through donation, land swap etc.; the State obligates 300 thousand dollars seed money, then the VA will fund the construction; maintenance upon opening is the sole responsibility of the State.

2. Assistant Deputy Director Klier:

- Arizona's Troops to Teachers program provides multiple incentives designed to encourage veterans being discharged to enter the teaching field and work in underserved areas. Currently Arizona's Troops to Teachers program is rated 8th in the Nation.
- Arizona's State Approving Agency, which is part of ADVS, accredits training programs for GI Bill participation. Veteran participation in these accredited programs results in an average of 12 million dollars coming annually into the State's economy.
- There are approximately 600,000 veterans in Arizona. ADVS now has satellite offices throughout the State with the objective of no veteran, dependent or survivor having to travel more than one hour to reach a Veterans' Benefits Counselor (VBC). The agency currently has 42 VBC's in place.

Mr. Bibich noted that the DVA standards state that there should be a minimum of one VBC for every 10 thousand veterans with one VBC for every 5 thousand veterans being preferred.

Comments and Questions from the floor:

Question: Can land be donated for a State cemetery?

Answer: Director Strickland noted that certainly donation is possible. ADVS needs the active support and involvement of the veterans' community and interested non-veterans.

Comments for the good of the Commission:

D R A F T until officially accepted by the Advisory Commission

- Commissioner Quochytewa announced that there is a lot of local interest in the Region 2 meeting in Chinle.
- Commissioner Heaney announced that the Region 3 meeting in Tucson will be at the Clarion Hotel on Tucson Blvd. Everything will be under one roof: lodging, restaurant and meeting room.
- Commissioner McKim noted that he and Commissioner Gent will be actively involved in notifying all potentially interested parties for the Tucson meeting. He stated that the personal touch (contact) with veteran organizations' leadership and local dignitaries seems to work best.

Adjournment: Commissioner Heaney moved to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Lunsford. Motion approved at 11:07 a.m. The next regular meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on December 11, 2008 at the State Veteran Home, 4141 N. 3rd Street, Phoenix AZ. 85012.

Submitted by
Lee Borgen
Secretary